

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 6109

LIMDIS

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, JO, GZ

SUBJECT: GAZAN SITUATION AND REACTION TO RECENT PLO DEVELOPMENTS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. RECENT TRIP BY EMBOFFS TO GAZA STRIP OFFERED A LIMITED OPPORTUNITY TO CONFIRM OFFICIAL ISRAELI STATEMENTS THAT SECURITY AND ECONOMIC SITUATION THERE REMAINS STABLE. EMBOFFS WERE TOLD THAT SYMPATHY IS WIDESPREAD WITHIN REFUGEE CAMPS FOR PLO AS "LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE" AS WELL AS FOR PALESTINIAN STATE COMPOSED OF GAZA STRIP AND WEST BANK UNDER PLO AUSPICES. CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS OF GAZA STILL HAVE RESERVATIONS ABOUT PLO CONTROL OF GAZA AND WEST BANK, BUT ARE BECOMING MORE ATTRACTED TO CONCEPT OF PALESTINIAN STATE. END SUMMARY.

2. ISRAELI MILITARY GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN (IDF MAJOR AMIR) BRIEFED EMBOFFS ON SECURITY AND ECONOMIC SITUATION IN GAZA. HE SAID THAT OVER THE PAST YEAR OR MORE THERE HAD BEEN NO SYSTEMATIC TERRORIST ACTIVITIES IN THE STRIP, ALTHOUGH SPORADIC

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INCIDENTS STILL TOOK PLACE. HE CLAIMED, AND SUBSEQUENT

CONVERSATIONS WITH LIMITED NUMBER OF OTHER RESIDENTS APPEARED TO CONFIRM, THAT GENERAL SECURITY SITUATION IN GAZA AT PRESENT IS STABLE. HE ALSO SAID THAT GAZAN ECONOMY WAS IN GOOD SHAPE AND CONTINUING TO BENEFIT FROM FREE ACCESS FOR ITS PRODUCTS TO ISRAEL AS WELL AS TO EAST BANK MARKETS. A MAJOR FACTOR IN STRIP'S ECONOMIC PROSPERITY, HE THOUGHT, WAS OPPORTUNITY FOR GAZAN LABOR TO BE EMPLOYED IN ISRAEL. HE GAVE IMPRESSION THAT ONLY MAJOR CURRENT CONCERN OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES ABOUT GAZAN SITUATION WAS LIKELIHOOD THAT IF THERE WAS SERIOUS DOWNTURN IN ISRAELI ECONOMY, THIS COULD HAVE A VERY ADVERSE IMPACT ON GAZAN EMPLOYMENT. (COMMENT: AMIR OF COURSE OVERSTATED "ECONOMIC PROSPERITY" OF GAZANS).

3. EMBOFFS ALSO HAD OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO MOHAMMED SHAWWA, PRO-HASHEMITE SPOKESMAN OF SHAWWA CLAN, RE GAZAN POLITICAL ATTITUDES. AS EXPECTED, SHAWWA REPEATED HIS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED (SEE TEL AVIV 9472 OF NOV 23, 1973) POSITION ON LINKAGE OF GAZA STRIP WITH JORDAN UNDER ANY FINAL PEACE SETTLEMENT. THIS TIME, HOWEVER, SHAWWA STATED THAT THERE SHOULD BE AUTONOMOUS GAZAN-WEST BANK STATE WHICH WOULD IN TURN BE JOINED TO THE EAST BANK BY MEANS OF FEDERATION. AT SOME LATER TIME, HOWEVER, ISRAEL SHOULD BE MADE A PART OF THE FEDERATION. IN THE INTERIM, SHAWWA ADVOCATED A CONTINUATION OF OPEN BORDERS POLICY WITH GAZAN AND WEST BANK WORKERS FREE TO TRAVEL BACK AND FORTH TO ISRAEL. SHAWWA EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER RECENT GAINS MADE BY PLO, SPECIFICALLY THE ENHANCED POSITION OF PLO AS RESULT OF LAST MONTH'S TRIPARTITE COMMUNIQUE IN CAIRO. AS IN THE PAST, SHAWWA VOICED HIS MISGIVINGS SHOULD PLO BE GRANTED A ROLE IN GOVERNING GAZA STRIP. HE ALLEGED THAT SENTIMENT WITHIN THE STRIP WAS AGAINST THE PLO BUT WOULD NOT GO SO FAR AS TO SAY IT WAS PRO-HASHEMITE. SHAWWA DID ADMIT, HOWEVER, THAT SUPPORT WAS GROWING FOR AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE COMPRISED OF THE GAZA STRIP AND THE WEST BANK.

4. SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT VIEWPOINT WAS GIVEN US BY AMERICAN EDUCATED GAZAN WHO HAS BEEN WORKING IN GAZAN REFUGEE CAMPS FOR ISRAELI MINISTRY OF SOCIAL WELFARE FOR PAST THREE YEARS. SHE SAID THAT SUPPORT AMONG CAMP DWELLERS WAS OVERWHELMINGLY FOR PLO AS "LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF CONFIDENTIAL

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THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE" AND FOR A WEST BANK-PALESTINIAN STATE RUN BY THE PLO. THERE WAS SOME SENTIMENT FOR RETURN TO EGYPTIAN RULE, BUT SHE TERMED IT INSIGNIFICANT. AS FOR SUPPORT AMONG CAMP DWELLERS FOR HUSSEIN, PRIOR TO EVENTS OF 1970-1971 GAZANS WERE INDIFFERENT TO HUSSEIN. HOWEVER, BLOODY SHOWDOWN BETWEEN GOJ AND FEDAYEEN TURNED THIS INDIFFERENCE INTO STRONG ANTI-HASHEMITE ANTI-PATHY.

5. AS FOR ACCEPTANCE OF STATE OF ISRAEL, OUR SOURCE SAID THAT CONTACT BETWEEN GAZANS AND ISRAELIS OVER PAST FEW YEARS HAD CONVINCED GAZANS THAT ISRAEL WAS HERE TO STAY AND GAZANS WERE PREPARED TO LIVE AS NEIGHBORS WITH ISRAEL. HOWEVER, ISRAELI RULE OF GAZA STRIP WAS DEEPLY DISLIKED AND GAZANS WOULD OPT FOR RULE BY ANY ARAB STATE IF IT MEANT GETTING RID OF ISRAEL.

6. COMMENT. WE BELIEVE BOTH SOURCES HAVE ACCURATELY DESCRIBED CURRENT SENTIMENTS WITHIN GAZA STRIP, BUT EACH IS REFLECTING DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OF GAZAN SOCIETY. WELL-OFF GAZANS, AS REPRESENTED BY SHAWWA, ARE NOT NECESSARILY IN SYMPATHY WITH PLO, YET AT SAME TIME WE DONOT THINK THEY ARE PARTICULARLY PRO-HASHEMITE(EXCEPT FOR SHAWWA CLAN WHICH SEEMS TO BE SO FOR REASONS OF ECONOMIC SELF-INTEREST). LIKE GAZA REFUGEES, THEY RESENT ISRAELI RULE ANDWOULD LIKE TO SEE IT REPLACED, PROBABLY BY A PALESTINIAN STATE BUT WITH CONSERVATIVE GAZAN AND WEST BANK ELEMENTS IN CONTROL. PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN GAZA, ON OTHER HAND, FEEL NO SENSE OF OBLIGATION TOWARD SEMI-FEUDAL TRADITIONAL INDIGENOUS GAZAN LEADERSHIP AND REGARD PLO AS THEIR CHAMPION. WHETHER ISRAEL WOULD ACQUIESCE TO FORMATION OF PLO-RUN STATE IS CONSIDERATION THAT GAZAN REFUGEES SEEM NOT TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT. WHAT DOES COME THROUGH IN CONVERSATIONS WITH GAZANS IS THAT THEY CAN DO LITTLE TO DETERMINE THEIR OWN FUTURE AND THAT OF NECESSITY, THIS MUST BE LEFT TO OTHER PARTIES.
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